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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 000849

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2018
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [BM](#) [KN](#) [ZI](#) [SU](#) [CI](#)
SUBJECT: CHILE SUPPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA AT UNGA

REF: STATE 93981

Classified By: Acting E/Pol Chief Tim Stater for reason 1.4 b.

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary. Chile supports U.S. and other efforts to advance human rights at the UN General Assembly and is likely to once again support country-specific resolutions expressing concern about conditions in Iran, Burma, and North Korea. Officials at the MFA's Office of Human Rights were receptive to U.S. positions on possible resolutions on Belarus, Sudan, and Zimbabwe but had not yet formulated a position. Chile is concerned about balancing respect for religion with freedom of expression, and is most likely to once again abstain on a defamation of religion resolution. End Summary.

Country-Specific Resolutions

[¶2.](#) (C) Poloff and Poleconoff delivered reftel points to Juan Anibal Barria, Director of the MFA's Human Rights Office, and Gerardo Ateaga, MFA Advisor in the same office, on September [¶16.](#) Poloff began by noting that Chile had voted with the U.S. against all of the no action motions and for all of the country specific resolutions in 2006 and 2007. Poloff thanked Chile for this high level of support, and asked if the U.S. could count on Chile's support again in the anticipated resolutions on Iran, Burma, and North Korea. Barria answered that while Chile would not be able to make a commitment until it had reviewed the actual text of the specific resolutions, Chile was very concerned about the situation in those three countries and would very likely continue to support those resolutions.

[¶3.](#) (C) Poloff shared current U.S. thinking that the release of the last political prisoners in Belarus was a positive sign that should be encouraged, even as the overall human rights situation in the country remains very poor. Barria said that the MFA had not yet discussed this issue, but that he felt it made sense to either forego a resolution this year or, if a resolution were proposed, to offer praise for the recent prisoner release as well as citing concerns in other areas.

[¶4.](#) (C) Barria, Ateaga, and Emboffs discussed the potential for country-specific resolutions on Sudan and Zimbabwe and concerns about freedom of expression and the proposed defamation of religion resolution in the context of the Human Rights Council, which Chile joined in June. Barria and Ateaga agreed that the Human Rights Council was not

performing well, and that strong regional groups--particularly of Islamic and African countries--made decision-making very difficult. The MFA had not yet focused specifically on the issues of resolutions on Zimbabwe and Sudan, but agreed with U.S. concerns about introducing resolutions about both countries and felt that of the two, it made the most sense to highlight Zimbabwe given that there appears to be more support for that resolution.

Thematic Resolutions

15. (C) Turning to the issues of religious defamation and freedom of expression, Ateaga explained that Chile had originally supported the resolution in the November 2007 vote because, in general, Chile approves of preventing religious defamation, but had changed its vote to an abstention due to concerns about overly restrictive language infringing on freedom of expression. Chile agreed with U.S. concerns about balancing freedom of expression with respect for religion, and also believed that all religions--not just Islam--should be afforded the same degree of protection. Nonetheless, Chile was unlikely to vote against a religious defamation resolution because the country supports the concept of respect for religion even if they disagree with the specifics of the resolution.

16. (C) Ateaga liked the idea of offering amendments to proposed resolutions to protect freedom of expression. He also thought that stand-alone resolutions in support of freedom of expression would be worthwhile, but was less comfortable voting against resolutions that, like the defamation of religions resolution, have some redeeming value in Chilean eyes but infringe on freedom of expression.

17. (C) Ateaga was enthusiastic about the prisoners of conscience issue and noted that Chile was one of the co-sponsors of the UN declaration. However, he had no suggestions for follow-on actions.

SIMONS